ADDRESSES AS OBJECTS FOR EMAIL MESSAGES

ABSTRACT

The present invention is directed at a system and process for allowing a user to treat email addresses as objects. This allows easy manipulation of the email addresses, such as allowing them to be added to a contact list, copied to the computer's clipboard, or double-clicked to open the related contact information for that email address' sender.. Email addresses are treated as objects in the message preview pane and full message windows of both incoming and outgoing email messages. A small icon is added to the text of each address. In a preferred embodiment, the icons will vary depending on the pedigree of the address. The invention is not limited to single addresses. Rather, an entry denoting a mailing list could also be treated as an object and a unique icon could be employed to indicate the nature of the entry. For outgoing messages, the pedigree of the address or list is determined by monitoring where the user obtained the address. For incoming messages, the message header is parsed and searched to find addresses that match the receiving user's address book. If no match is found, a generic address icon is added before the text of the address, while the system checks the email header against other address sources such as server lists. Once the address is marked with an appropriate icon the user can manipulate the address in various ways allowing the user to readily edit or add email addresses to their contact list. Additionally, the invention may include contextual menus to assist the user in this manipulation.